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Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, Mich., Inc.

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET
A Museum Of County Life

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • MARCH 2003

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Annual dues are individual, $15; couple/family $25; student or senior (60+) $10; senior couple $19; business/association $50; patron $100.

Pittsfield And Northfield Townships Show Their Stuff

Our newest exhibit on Pittsfield and Northfield Townships opened in February.

Emil Nordman's WWI uniform is on display from Pittsfield. Photo : S. Wineberg

Our latest exhibit, ***Tales of Two Townships,*** is a collaboration of the historical societies of Pittsfield and Northfield Townships. Enlargements of some post cards belonging to **Wystan Stevens** cover the walls of the Northfield Township displays. Artifacts and photos can be seen in the Pittsfield room. A dugout canoe, Indian artifacts, and a dollhouse represent the handiwork of the inhabitants. Bathing suits emphasize Whitmore Lake's resort history. Special thanks to **Grafaktri** for making the sign. The exhibit will be up until April 30.

This venture represents a symbolic reunion of the two townships for both were originally part of a very large **Ann Arbor Township.** In 1822, when the Legislative Council of the Michigan Territory ordered Washtenaw 'set off' for administration purposes, the county had been surveyed but had virtually no inhabitants. Gradual immigration by 1827 (fueled by the opening of the Erie Canal in New York State in 1825) led to the designation of three townships, Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, and Dexter, which divided the county into three equal vertical strips—huge by today's standards.

(Continued on page 13.)

Next Program

Sunday • April 27th
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
2:00 PM

Grace Shackman and **Louisa Pieper** will lead walking tours of the **Old Fourth Ward Historic District** while members of the church give guided tours of its stained glass windows. Meet at the church, 306 N. Division, Ann Arbor.

PAM NEWHOUSE

The Ryder Brothers *"...We Will Stand Our Chance."*

On a cold, blustery February 16th, some 40 people listened in the ballroom of Courthouse Square apartment building to Pam Newhouse reading the emotionally moving Civil War letters of the Ryder Brothers of Livonia, Michigan. Several descendants of the Ryder family were in the audience, adding poignancy to the occasion. Both brothers perished in the Battle of Gettysburg.

Newhouse, a former WCHS board member, has had a lifelong interest in the Civil War. Raised in Michigan, she did her undergraduate work at the U-M and received a Masters in Historic Preservation from EMU. She has worked as a site interpreter and researcher for the Ella Sharp Museum in Jackson and for the National Park Service at Chancellorsville Battlefield in Fredericksburg, Virginia

Newhouse also attended the Gettysburg Institute, which is the Civil War studies department of Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and was a 1995 recipient of the U.S. Military History Institute Fellowship where she researched Michigan's Civil War soldiers and flags. . In 1997 she received a grant from the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg to research and publish a monograph about the Codori family and their farm which is located in the middle of what is popularly known as "Pickett's Charge Field."

She has served on the Civil War Battle Flags Task Force in Michigan and is a founder of the Ann Arbor Civil War Round Table. She is also the descendant of a victim of the Sultana tragedy, the explosion of a ship bringing back freed Union prisoners after the end of the Civil War.

"Alfred Ryder, age 20, and his brother John, age 19, answered their country's call early in the Civil War by enlisting in the lst MI Cav and the 24 MI Inf, respectively. The boys were prolific writers and in their own words reported the war in letters to family and friends as they saw it.

In transcribing over 100 of their letters (which are still owned by their descendants) I have been allowed to peer into the lives of these two Civil War soldiers, and what I discovered I would like to share with you.

Alfred and John were the oldest of four children born to George and Henrietta Ryder of Livonia, Michigan. George had come with his parents to Livonia in 1827

Pam Newhouse reads the Ryder Brothers' Civil War letters to a rapt audience. Photo: S. Wineberg

from New York State via the Erie Canal. By the mid-1850s the Ryder family had established a large, prosperous farm with a new house at what is now Plymouth and Levan Roads. This was a hardworking family whose ancestors fought in the American Revolution. George had long been a strong Unionist and abolitionist and it was therefore no surprise that his two oldest sons should be among the first to join President Lincoln's new army.

In the fall of 1861 when Alfred signed up in the lst MI Cav, Co H., he wrote this on the first page of his memorandum book: *'This is the ninth day of September, 1861. I dedicate this book to my especial use in writing articles for friends, sentiments which I consider worthy of remembrance, facts worthy of distinction (well knowing in the varied circumstances in which I may be placed). Thoughts and facts may arise, beneficial through their novelty in after days, if kept for the gratification of a natural curiosity which exists in all men. Though I may be killed, I hope this book may be kept.'*

By December 10, John had also enlisted—in the Michigan Lancers. The Lancers existed only from December 10, 1861 to February 8, 1862, when the regiment was disbanded due to internal problems. John reflected on some of the trouble in a letter he wrote to Alfred, who was in Virginia:

Dear Brother,

'I suppose that you have heard of the disbanding of our lancer regiment, and I thank God that they are disbanded, for I think they never was a regiment in the United States of America that have starved and suffered for the want of provision as the lancers. You may think I have changed my mind wonderfully since I wrote to you before, and indeed I have. For when I first enlisted the officers was as good as pie, and we had plenty to eat, but as soon as the companies were full, the officers threw off the nice look and put on a sour one, and then we had dogs fare. After I got threw up with the measles, which was hard, I went back to Camp Backus and I caught a cold and had chils[sic] and fever, and was darn sick with the sick headake [sic], which was not very nice, where you could hear the racket and gaming and fighting of about a thousand men. The next day they took me to the hospital where I stayed one week and I tell you I was glad to eat while I was there. And when I got better I went back to camp and had nothing but dry bread and meat that fairly stank. Some of the time we had nothing but bread and coffy [sic] that taisted [sic] like dishwater. The officers has commenced smiling again for the men to enlist, but the most of them is too smart for them. They have got one thousand lances, I suppose they will keep them to spear bullfrogs. I think if I get out of this I shant enlist again, right away anyway.'

Alfred's reply to all this was as follows:

Dear Brother,

'I rec'd your kind letter yesterday and I can assure you that I was glad to hear from you. You report hard times in the Lancers. Oh! You know little from what few days you served the realities of soldiering. Don't believe that because I don't write hardships that there are none here to endure. Great Heavens! I could tell you stories that would make your eyes stick out, but it would be worse than useless so I will never make the attempt.'

Alfred also had this to say about serving in the cavalry vs. the infantry: *'This is a terrible country for mud—the soil mixing up for a full 6 inches in depth. If it wasn't for government roads it would be most impossible to get from camp. I rejoice in the day I enlisted in the cavilry [sic] when I see the poor infantry fellows wallowing nee [sic] deep in mire.'*

On January 21, Alfred writes that a comrade is seriously ill with the small pox. He calmly states, *'I expect to have it but no difference for I'm getting reckless in regards to such things to what I used to be. We have all got to die someday—it is only a question of time, yet still life is sweet to each—to each one of the world, but if death is a necessity there is no use of raising a hand in fear.'*

On February 14 Alfred writes about his impressions of Frederick, Maryland: *'Frederick is a splendid little city, the only fault being the fault of all cities which I have seen since I left Detroit—narrow streets. The people here look full faced and healthy. We are now north of the city, about 1 ½ miles I believe, but I'm turned around nearly all the time so I can't certainly tell. I saw Gen. Banks yesterday reviewing some troops this side of the city. He is rather a small man, I should think, but he being on horseback although I was close to him I could not tell—rather sharp features—with jet black whiskers. He was dressed in his full uniform with his great epulets [sic] on and three-cornered hat. Gen. Williams was with him. I see that there are a good many regiments up this way and all purty [sic] well drilled.'*

John, meanwhile, was keeping Alfred informed of all the news back home:

'...I have no more knews [sic], only the marriage of hellin [sic] Knickerbacher. She is married to Sid Fitsgirls, the greatest lover ever known. He went over there, and when they got all ready, she went in the other room and cried about 2 hours, and Sid went in and told her she had not better have him if she felt so bad. She said it might as well come off then as any time, it had got to be done, so they started crying and went to Plymouth and got married, and then he and his wife and Willard and anlize [sic] went to his uncle to spend the night. Hellin cried all night. It happened they had 4 beds, Sid in one, helin in the other, Wilbert the other, anlize the other. They asked Sid if he would sleep alone. She felt so bad he said yes, and always, if she wanted him to. I pity him.' We can only imagine what a laugh Alfred got out of THAT!

Spring came and Alfred writes: *'Piedmont Station, April 22, 1862, Dear Mother, Being somewhat unoccupied today and having the privileges of pen and paper I thought I would write you a few words that you might know that the same sun that shines upon you looks down upon me in health. I was glad to receive a letter from home dated 6th April. Can you estimate the value of a letter here, with us, almost isolated in the world as it were? We know nothing much of what's going on in the world except the little space immediately cirrounding [sic] us.*

You have believed, I see, by that letter, that our Co. has been in the Winchester Battle, but have been mistaken. We have been in no real battles yet; although we have frequently fired on and been fired at. The rebles [sic] always fire and run; they are sneaking cowards and lowlived villians—entirely unfit to compete in honest warfare. They are gurrillias [sic] and desparadoes and the citizens worse still. I see that sickness and death is with us on our leaving our native town was ***David McFarlin.*** *He said he should be glad to see us all return and poor man, he goes before any of us. And almost the only living being that I saw and knew in that vast crowd that we left on the wharf at Detroit was* ***Willie Brown,*** *and now he's gone. And* ***John Bunnell*** *too, all gone forever. I'm left yet and more exposed to dangers and disease. Life is a puzzle. The boys are all well. Hoping you may receive this and will dispose with all foreboding, I remain Yours Forever, A.G. Ryder, Banks Division, Virginia.'*

Marilyn Smith, David Ryder Smith and three generations of Ryder descendants. Photo: S. Wineberg

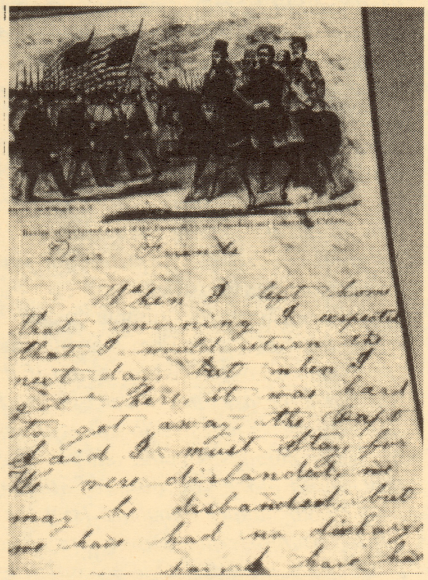
On July 3rd Alfred wrote home while in Washington, D.C.:

'We have this eve got Sharps carbine rifles, said to be a very effective weapon, and I think that their appearance verified the saying for one of our boys shot 60 rounds tonight and put the ball in the eye of the target, and that the first time. But what would I be telling or thinking about if I was at home tonight? About war you supposed, and I guess not—Tomorrow is the 4th of July. I hope it will be celebrated in Old Michigan as becomes the day. I know nothing that will interest me much tomorrow except I might go down and hear a declaration speech at the soldiers' retreat. But it's getting rather late so I'll cut short our letter by a prayer for your joys tomorrow. AG Ryder.'

While at Culpepper, Virginia on July 28 Alfred answers a letter from John at home: *'You speak about enlisting again if the war wouldn't last forever. All I've got to say is that I should like to talk with you for a few minutes. I could tell you tales that would make you think of sticking near by our mother's coubird [sic] for a while, at any rate. Don't you think because I don't write home my sufferings in flying colors that there is no divil [sic] in the pot. For believe me when I tell you that I have seen strong men curse the day they enlisted with tears in their eyes. If you want a taste again just try it at home for awhile. First, fast for 4 days without even hard bread, don't sleep, let it rain all the time and you be wet, without mentioning the comfort of whistling bullets and see how you like it. And then if you like it I will tell you some things that you wouldn't like. But then it's all what one might expect. I'm not yet deceived in soldiering. Tell the drummer boy Charley [their 8 year old brother] I should like to see him some day and in fact I should be glad to see you all.'*

All of Alfred's warnings about soldiering fell on deaf ears and on August 9th of 1862, John re-enlisted at Plymouth, this time with the newly formed 24th Michigan Infantry. John and 99 other area men made up Co. C, and many were childhood friends. Such was the case of John Ryder and **Alfred Noble,** whose family farms were adjoining. These two were messmates and tent mates during the time they served in the 24th. Alfred had this to say to his mother about John's enlistment:

'You say that they say that the rebellion shall be put down this fall. I guess, I guess, that they will have to lengthen that time some—and that Jonny has gone to enlist, well, if he has got the war fever and is bound to go I hope it will never terminate in chills here in "dixies land." I should have thought that he would have gone in the Cavalry, for its a great deal better



Sample letter on Grand Army of the Potomac stationary. Collection of Ryder descendants.

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How do you Michiganders think our course stands? As for me, it certainly appears below par, and I know not even how it can advance amongst such terrible pressure. Some people have too feeble an idea of the earnestness of the rebles [sic]. I tell you, from what I know that their devotion is absolute. Their Gens have more at stake than ours and they take more pains to inspire their men than ours. The fact [is] that our Officers build too much on their shoulder straps—put on too much false dignity—and even exercise too much jealousy between themselves.'

John, newly arrived in Virginia, makes these observations: Camp Shearer, Sept. 11,

'Dear Friends, I can tell you that this is a hard looking Country. There is no fences, no Crops. There is corn 2 or 3 miles away that is so high that you can not begin to reach the top of it, where you see hundreds of horses turned into it. It looks horrible. They is a man that I saw yesterday that owns a farm not far away that declared that if this war did not close shortly that they would be a famine in the South. There is some parts of Virginia for miles around that there is not anything at all to live on.

We are now about 4 miles from Washington and we have a fine camping place and have as good times as you could expect for soldiers. I think that this war will end in less than 6 months, in one way or the other. They is a man in Washington that wants to bet 5 thousand dolars [sic] that this war will end in 60 days. I hope he will win it, but I fear he will lose. If this war could end, and I and Alfred could return home unharmed, I should be thankful but if we should not, we will stand what may come.'

In an October 1862 letter, John expressed to his family hope that he would indeed return home:

'I have faith to think that I am a coming home again, and I am shure [sic] that I have just as much Desire to come back, when this war comes to a close as any other fellow, but if it should be for me not to come back, I supposed I can stand it as well as anybody else.'

As fall progresses, John sings the praises of his officers, saying that *'we have got the best officers that ever can be had in America.'* Rations were slim while in the field. John admits to his mother of doing things on private property that *'would draw tears'* to the owner. *He says 'we go to a (rebs) house and ask for something to eat and they will give you nothing, and then we try to buy it but they only accept secesh money, so we put a ball through a hog, chicken, or something.'*

During November of 1862, John complains of a sick headache and diarrhea. His regiment has yet to see a battle but on Nov. 27th he writes that they captured 30 rebels and one of them, was *'one of the most curious objects of mankind I ever saw. He was barefooted, bareheaded, and would shake so that he almost fell over.'* Along these same lines, John writes to his eight year old brother Charley: *'As I have a little more time to spare, I will write to let you know how things look way down in old Virginia. I can tell you my boy that this is a hard looking place to be compaired [sic] with the place where you live. When you see a picture in a paper of one of the old men in Virginia, you may think it looks just like him. It is quite a curiosity here to see a man with citizens clothes on and when you see one it is generally... an old ragged, forsaken Secesh, shivering at his shanty and begging for something to eat. But Charley, they is a great many things that would interest the eyes of many. If you was here now [you would] see the glistening of thousands of bayonets and the rattling of flying artillery a going over the stones and country, rushing to and fro. And there is something that would interest you still more—to see so many horses. They is thousands of horses a passing here all the time.'*

On December 13, 1862, the 24th was in its first major battle at Fredericksburg. John was able to write this letter home on the 19th:

'Dear Mother, I received your letter of the 10th last night, and I was glad to get it, for I had not had a letter from home in some time. The sun shines out this morn very warm and pleasant for this season of the year, and I am now a writing on the ground, with my tent packed, We have had order to march, but we may not go today. We can't tell until the order comes in to fall in. I am getting along first rate now, all but being purty [sic] week [sic]. A soldier can't expect to do so well in keeping his health as he could at home, for of course the ground is his bed, and cloth for a covering, and he must have a cold, and so much smoke, it gives one the headake [sic]. I am not a going to the hospital now but they took down some names this morn and they took down Noble's name but he may not go. I supposed that you know that our regiment has bin [sic] in a fight but it was purty lucky, only 18 killed and wounded. I was sick at the time, but I tried to keep up, but my strength failed. I saw the fight, it was worth a thousand dollars to me, but I don't care about seeing another. I stood upon a big hill and saw both armies a fighting. The shells would burst around like shot, but some disgraced themselves and friends by running. Charley Root run, and deserted the company. He is now under arrest. Some think that he will eather [sic] be sent aboard the man-of-war for five years, or be shot. If I should ever run in the time of battle, I hope that I won't leave the field alive.'

Months afterwards a comrade in Co. B who was in the battle made this entry in his diary: *'Dreams of Fredericksburg continue to haunt me and I can not sleep. Dead men parade before my eyes. Cannonading rings in my ears. Always there is the dead reb. I took his tobacco.*

Copy of a recruitment poster for the 24th Infantry c. 1862.

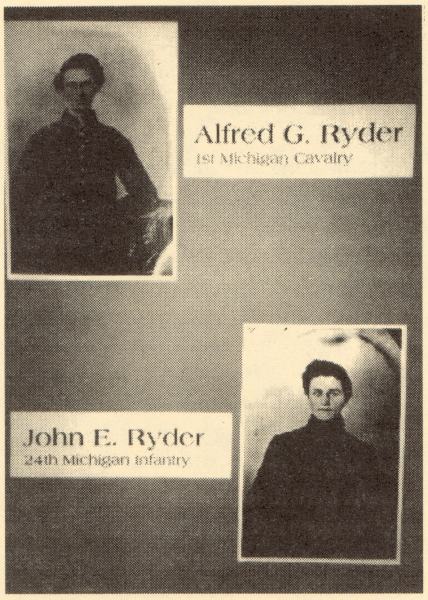
It was shameful to do, but he did not need it. I have killed men.'

In spite of the valor and sacrifice of many soldiers, Fredericksburg was a bitter defeat for the Union. **Gen. Burnside** tried to salvage that loss by ordering his troops to move across the front with Lee's Army with the aim of weakening him on his flank and attacking him. The problem was rain and mud—lots of it. The artillery got hopelessly bogged down as did the men and horses, and Burnside had to admit failure once again. John wrote that they marched 'about 40 miles' and were urged onward by orders from Burnside that said that they were 'once again going to see the enemy' and 'all that lived to see the 4th of July would be able to have their dinner at home.' By the end of January the men were back in their huts, settled down for winter. The infamous "Mud March" had ended.

Meanwhile Alfred and the lst Mi Cav were in Occoquan, Virginia guarding the Capitol. Life here was fairly quiet. Alfred writes his mother that his tentmates say he *'snores... it is bad.'* Routine duty is spiced up by an event which happened on March 8, 1863. Union General **Edwin Stoughton** lived the high life, having a well-known fondness for liquor and women. He made his HQ in a private house some distance from his men, and in the evening, following a party, fell into his bed only to be awakened by **Confederate Gen. John Mosby** himself, who then easily took Stoughton as his prisoner, along with some Union guards and quite a few horses. When President Lincoln heard of the raid he was far more upset by the loss of the horses and exclaimed *'I can make new Brigadier Generals but I can't make horses!'* Alfred Ryder comments on this surprise event in his journal on March 11: *'Was down to Fairfax yesterday and heard the facts concerning the capture of Gen. Stoughton. It is the coolest thing that has been done during the war. He, putting on stile [sic], off from his command in town and taken out of his bed at midnight. But it's good enough and if Mosby would gobble up some of our officers every night it would be a good thing.'*

Alfred's feelings about his officers are obviously very different from the way John feels about his. On March 28 Alfred writes in his journal:

'I'm ordered to report with others to ***Capt. Macabe****. He takes us to the house of Mr. John Dulany for the purpose of searching for arms, so said, but I believe now for the purpose of gratifying his own selfish ends. He makes him prisoner and places me guard over him while he fills his pockets with plunder. Maledictions on such men for they disgrace the cause for which we are engaged. Officers of the army are too lightly bound to respect the rights and regulations of war. Although our enemies are swift to do evil we should remember mercy as the first law of heaven and act in accordance.'*



Alfred G. and John E. Ryder posed in their uniforms. Both died at Gettysburg in 1863 and are buried in the family plot at Plymouth and LeVan Roads in Livonia, MI.

Alfred continues to think about death. He writes in his journal: *'Weep not for him who dieth, for he sleeps and is at rest, and the couch whereon he lieth, is the green earth's quiet breast.'*

Alfred's health has been poor and he ends up in a Washington hospital for a time. When he returns to his regiment his Captain keeps him off duty because he is still too weak. When he writes his younger sister Elizabeth he speaks for all soldiers who are away from home: *'I want you to write oftener. You can't tell how a letter cheers one up. It throws sunlight in many dark places by carrying one over to those distant firesides.'*

Back at camp with John, the weather is miserable and is affecting the health of the regiment. He writes: *'Camp Isabella, March 20, 1863, Dear Father, This morn I will try to answer the letter I received from you a day or two since. I have just come off guard, and so I am allowed a short time to rest, and I will improve it by writing. It is a raining and snowing together, so it isn't very pleasant weather. The prospects is now that our stoppage here is short.* ***Gen. Meredith*** *came down yesterday with a lot of phisitions [sic] to examine the quarters of the 24th to see if they could account for their being so many sick and dying out of the regiment, and they decided that is was because of the soldiers was a living under ground, that they had dug holes and live where the sun or light could not get to them. But our house isn't so, we dug no hole, but have built it with small logs, and so if that is all, we are not endangered to disease. But the Col. said that we must all take off the tops of our tents and let the sun shine in to them, but it rains and so we can't do it. The Col. said he thought that we would leave here shortly.*

We had a regimental inspection this morning and ***Mr. Way*** *delivered the prayer after inspection and is to preach at 2 PM. Our Col. gets high praise for the good drill of his regiment. Gen. Meredith told him that he was proud of the 24th for its good drill, soldierly appearance, and was glad to welcome it in with the Old Iron Brigade. And* ***Gen. Hooker*** *told him after the review when all of the Cols. Went and shook hands, he said '* ***Col. Morrow,*** *you have a fine regiment, fine as silk' and the Col. Felt so well over it he let us lay still for 2 days having nothing but dress parade.'*

The 24th is now well provisioned with *'plenty of hard tack, coffee, sugar, hard soap and candles'* plus other things *'once in a while.'* Some captured rebs told John they had nothing but *'Yankey [sic] hard bread and old bacon.'*

On March 29th, John writes:

'Our Gen, Gen Morrow, made a speech to us. All of the boys like him. He was Col. Of the 19th Indiana for 17 months. He spoke in an affecting way about the present condition of our country, and that the people at home were atrying to injure the government by slang [slander?] and wanted to settle this war in dishonorable terms, and that they said the army of the Potomac was demoralized and worn out and was good for nothing at best... Resolve that the fourth brigade are still willing to fight the battles of their country, and if the people at the North still rises in favor of the South that we will put them down, even at the point of the bayonet. The ground shook with (cheers and stamping) so I think the army of the Potomac isn't all dead yet. You can tell the traitors at the North if they can't stop a blowing for the south that this brigade will come and (run) over them. Our Gen. told us that they were the worst enemies we had—much worse than the rebs in arms before us.'

Another man who is well liked in the regiment is 38 year old Wm. C. Way. He

was a Methodist minister at Plymouth when he enlisted in the 24th at the same time that John did. John writes his father that *'In fact, Way knows but little about soldiering but on a march he has a horse to ride and a (darkey) to take care of him and cook his meals, so he is all right.'*

From May 1st through May 3rd the armies again clashed at Chancellorsville. What was a big win again for the Confederates at first seems the opposite to John:

'I think the rebs lost 4 to our one for they would attack us and then while our infantry was fighting them our men poured grapeshot and canister into them. They was about 6 acres that was completely stacked with dead and wounded, mostly rebs. Although we had a great many. The rebs set fire to a peace [sic] of woods and burnt up a great many. There was some three months men from New Jersey—Col. Flanigan told us if they run, shoot them first. Our regiment only lost but 24 and got high praise from Gen. Meredith for charging on the rebs and taking the heights. They was a Lt. in Co. C when we crossed the river and they was pouring balls on us, he went over the pontoons, up a stone wall, and out of sight. He was scart [sic] to death and when he came back to us yesterday we 'hunted him out of camp'... (and) one of our boys, Wesley Phillips, shot a hole through his foot. He is the son of a minister up by Salem. Oh, hant it better to die like a man than half die like a sneak as Philips did."

A few days earlier John reported that a deserter had been drummed out of their camp. He says '*the way they do it is to have 4 walk ahead of him with their bayonets turned towards him and so many behind and two on each side, so he had to be very careful or get a bayonet run into him. Drums beat and they generally hear groans and insults.'*

On picket duty after Chancellorsville John writes that he has been talking to nearby reb pickets from the 31st Georgia. He says:

'They mourn Jackson greatly. They said we Michiganders was the gritiest boys they ever faced. They said they had fought the 8th Michigan a number of times and the 24th would not be behind. I think that if it wasn't for (the fear of) being disgraced 2/3 of the reb army would surrender, although when they are called on to fight they will fight like tigers.'

By June 13th the army of Northern Virginia was heading towards Pennsylvania, with the Army of the Potomac to follow. John comments wryly: '*We have been expecting to march again but I guess we will rest. As Alfred Noble says, 'marching orders and order to march are two distinct orders altogether.'*

But by June 20th the army was on the move in earnest. John writes: *Camp near Broad Run, Dear Mother, As I now have a little time to spare I will improve it by penning a few lines to let you know that we are still living and purty well. This letter may never reach you but I will however write it. We have not had any mail in 7 days and we are on the move most every day. Today we are laying still although we had to get up last night at 3 o'clock to go but did not. It rained last night. They was rockets in the air and that might be the reason we are on the move most every day. I will not try to tell you of our horrible marches. The man that was shot in our Brigade was done in the presence of our division while (we) halted for dinner. It has bin [sic] awful marching as the blazing sun of Virginia poured down upon us like fire. You can judge it was some heat as a Major died on his horse, 3 died in our regt. And one in our company is now crazy and thinks he cannot live. We marched most of the time at the rate of 20 miles a day and all along the road it was covered with blankets, coats and clothing of all kinds. I threw (away) all I had, but what I had to carry was my rubber tent, gun, cartridges (60 pounds), portfolio, canteen and 3 days rations. I expected to see Alfred but passed by within a short distance where he was said to be on picket."*

Finally the two brothers did meet. Alfred hurriedly writes home: June 28th 1863, Camp near Fredrik Md, '*Dear Friends, I take this hurried opportunity of sending you a few lines—I am well. I have received no letter from home lately. We crossed the river on the 24th and I have had the great privilage [sic] of seeing and visiting with Jonny twice. I left him this morning at Middletown, that is, I saw him and Alfred N. there last night. Jonny is well, so is Alfred. Jonny looks poor but he says he is very healthy. They expect that we will have a fight in a few days at all events. I don't know if you will ever receive this or not. Everything here is confusion. We seem to be advancing in the rear of the rebs on PA and the result may shortly follow. The two other Brigades of our division have taken up our line of march and we will follow soon. So excuse me this time. Remember me to all. The boys are all well—Yours Forever AG.'*

In his private journal, Alfred is more truthful, writing '*God blessed me today with the opportunity of seeing Jonny for the first time in two years. He looks near broken down. It pains me to look at him and think where he is.'* He adds *'I'm tired of lingering. If fighting is to be done, better to do it now than to wait for sickness to destroy the enemy.'*

John also wrote home about his meeting with Alfred. This was to be his last letter: *'June 28, 1863, Dear Father, I have just received a letter from you and as we have got a little time I will improve it by writing a few lines in reply. We haven't received a mail in 3 or 4 days. We have bin on the march every day since we left our old camp. We came here last night, and have got a little rested now, but are again under marching orders, and expect to go today but may not. We have just had our guns and aminition [sic] inspected. As we was marching day before yesterday, we passed by the 1st Cav. And of if it didn't give me new life to see Alfred and all of the boys, but could only say a few words and again had to part. And yesterday morn our Noble Commander Gen. Meridith drawed us up in our line, our brigade, and made a speech to us. Told us we was about to meet our enimies [sic] again and he said he did not ask us to do better than we had, but to do as well, and we will do it I believe. And last night we came into camp here and soon learned that the 1st Cav. was about 2 miles from us.*

I was very tired, but that was not going to stop me if I could get away, so I and Noble got a pass from the Col. And started. We had hard work to get there on account of the provos, but with some teasing we passed the last one, and soon I met Burr, and he went with us to the regt. And there we saw Alfred, Farley, and Farwell, and we stayed till late at night, and had the best visit I ever had in my life, talking over old times and the times we had passed through during the war. Late at night we parted in hopes to meet again some day. Alfred had tried hard to get a pass to come here but could not and he said this morn he would try it again but I guess they have moved. The rest of the boys were very anksious to come also and said if they stayed and could not get a pass they would take a French one. I have heard two canon this morn. I expect we will have a great battle shortly so as it has got to be done, let it come and we will look for the best. I will now close. We are

well. Yours very truly, J.E. Ryder to G.N. Ryder. Ma, I got the tea all right and it came very good. I will write to you shortly. If you hear of a battle cheer up and think it all for the best, for we will stand our chance. I and Alfred had a good visit."

On July 1st the 24th had an early breakfast near **Emmitsburg, Maryland** and set out with their division up the Emmitsburg Road toward **Gettysburg, Pennsylvania,** 11 miles away. As they came to the Codori Farm just south of town they were ordered to file off the road and push through the fields to the left on the double quick. There was no time to load their guns, so they did their best to load them on the run. They dashed up a hill on McPherson's Ridge and down into a ravine, and ran straight into Archer's Tennesseeans and Alabamians. The worst was yet to come. In the afternoon the 24th got caught in a murderous crossfire that decimated the regiment. Of the 496 men who went into battle that day 394 were casualties, and John Ryder was among them—one of the dead.

Two days later, **Edward Raymor** of Co. B writes in his diary:

"Gettysburg terrible. Advanced double quick on the 1st and did not have time to load guns. Fighting in the woods lasted over 1 hour. Standing 20 paces from the rebs we fired continuous volleys. Lost Price and Cline. Lost my way in the confusion when I heard Carroll cry out. Heard he is dead now. I killed 14 rebs. Shot the one who killed John Pardington. Lt. Buell rebuked me for drinking after. Said I would not be promoted. I do not care."

On July 5th, Capt. Albert Edwards of Co. F, who ended up in command of the 24th at the end of July 1st, writes to his hometown newspaper, the ***Detroit Tribune:*** *"I send you a list of the casualties and losses so far as is known. The list is terrible. There will be many sad hearts in Wayne County."*

All this was unknown to Alfred. He was mortally wounded on July 3 as the Union cavalry successfully stopped the advance of Jeb Stuart's horsemen to the rear of the Union line. "After-action" reports written by Gen. George Custer show that his greatest regimental losses were those of the 1st Michigan Cavalry. On July 8th, from a makeshift hospital in a brick school building in Gettysburg, Alfred has a friend write a letter home:

Dear Mother,

"I have desired a friend to say to you I have been in the last fight we have had; it was in and around Gettysburg near the Pennsylvania and Maryland line; I was wounded in the side by a ball. I am not without hope. The Lord willeth all things for good. I am in a hospital in Gettysburg. I hope you are all well and happy. From your affectionate son, Alfred G. Ryder. Brother John is here also in one of the hospitals but not badly wounded."

The next day, Chaplain Way wrote Mr. George Ryder:

Dear Sir—Perhaps from other sources you have heard of yours sons, both of whom are in the Service of their country, and both of whom I fear have been sacrificed upon its altar. John went with us in the 24th and was killed on the lst day of July near this place, and I buried him with my own hands. In my labors among the wounded at this place, in the various hospitals, I found Alfred of the 1st Cav, who was wounded and is now lying in a dangerous condition in a hospital at the Union School House. I conversed with him for a long time. He does not expect to live. He is wounded through the left lung and it is with some difficulty that he breaths [sic] and has lost the use of his limbs almost entirely. I asked him if he had any word to send home. He gave me his testament to give to his mother. He has carried it with him through the war so far. He also said, "Tell father to do well by my brother Charley and when you look on him remember me." In regard to dying he seems to be fully resigned and said, "The Lord doeth all things well." He seemed to realize the need of a faith in Christ, evidenced by works, and is trying to prepare for the worst. He wants to meet John in Heaven, where he has gone exchanging this battling world for a better home above. I deeply sympathize with you in your sorrow. I shall do all I can for Alfred while I remain here, which may be a week yet, and if he dies will see him decently buried. I am going soon to see him again and carry him some lemons. You can address me here perhaps for two weeks. Alfred said he hoped to meet you all in Heaven."

This letter was <u>not</u> received by the Ryders before George Ryder left home to go to Gettysburg to look for his sons. It was Chaplain Way's sad task to tell him when he arrived of John's death and of Alfred's precarious state. George asked Chaplain Way to write his wife:

Mrs. George Rider [sic], Dear Madam [Gettysburg, July 18, 63]

Your husband is here and in attendance upon Alfred who is very low, and from all appearances is sinking fast. I see that he grows weaker every day. Mr. Rider spoke about writing and I knew that he did not want to leave Alfred and I volunteered to write for him, which he said he would be glad to have me do. I happened to be at the cars when he came in town, and recognized him as he waz[sic] just about passing by me, and having seen Alfred several times, I could direct him, and went with him. It seems so strange that he had not received my letters to him, written long enough ago to have reached home before he left, in which I had told him and yourself of the death of John and the condition of Alfred. Upon learning the facts of the case, his cup seemed to be full, and very bitter. I am glad he came, and that he found Alfred alive. I presume he will remain with him until he shall be better or shall have laid down his life for his country's regeneration. Alfred seems to be so patient, so calm, so considerate, that my heart is all enlisted for him. I have conversed with him several times upon the subject of the future. You know what his opinions have been, but I think he looks at things in a different light now, and is prepared to go or Stay. I shall see him again this Evening. John is in heaven now, joining the praises of the Church triumphant. Praise God for it. I think Alfred will join him soon."

Alfred died on July 24, 1863. In September, Mrs Ryder got this letter from John's good friend Alfred Noble:

Rappahannock Station, Virginia, Sept 15th—1863

My Respected Friend,

"I write to you today in order to give all the particulars that I can bear in regard to Johnny's death. I was not with the reg't in the battle but was sent in with the 6th Wisconsin so I did not see him, & in the confusion of the hasty retreat through the town, the few that escaped were so intently engaged in making good their own retreat that they were not able to give much account of the rest that were missing. After the battle was over, I saw one of the boys who was wounded, & he told me that he saw Johnny fall & that he was certainly killed. I did not write to you then because I hoped soon to see those who could give me more information on the subject, but after that I didn't see anyone who knew anything more about it than I had already heard, until I heard from home that Mr. Ryder

had gone to Gettysburg, where he saw Elder Way who buried him and of course he would hear all that was known about it.

Mother writes me that you have heard by John Passage's letter, that he was not instantly killed & that you feared he had wasted away, without care, for 2 or 3 days. Now I assure you that this is untrue. Serg't Pomeroy, who has just come to the reg't, passed over the field after the battle and found his body & he is confident that he was instantly killed. And his opinion is certainly worth more than Passage's who was not with the reg't but was with me, in the 6th Wisconsin, & what he heard & told was without foundation.

Charles Pinkerton saw a man fall nearly behind him & he is quite certain that it was Johnny, & the person he saw was instantly killed. So, I hope you will not allow your deep grief to be deepened by any dark picture of mortal anguish after the death wound had been given.

Johnny was thought much of by every man in the company, & to me who had always been his most intimate friend ever since we have been in the service. He seemed but little less than a brother, and little did I think when I left to go on guard the night of the 30th of June, that we should never meet again. But a mysterious Providence has removed him & we must submit to its decrees, however much pain the effort costs us. Sooner or later Death must surely overtake us, & how can one better die, than in fighting for the defense of his Country." Yours truly, Alfred Noble.

In early November, George Ryder got a letter from John Frey, a Gettysburg farmer turned undertaker. He says that all the soldiers' bodies that are in temporary graves are to be taken to the new National Cemetery and once buried there, cannot be removed. He asks George to send him $92 immediately and he will exhume the bodies, which are buried together in the German Reformed Church cemetery near the Union School hospital where Alfred died. They are marked by a simple wooden grave marker. He will ship the bodies home by train. Twelve days later Frey writes that he exhumed the bodies but their boxes had burst and so he had to have new zinc coffins made for shipping purposes—for $20 more. On Dec. 2, after the bodies had been shipped, Frey writes again, asking for another $20 and requesting that George send him photographs of his sons for his collection.

His final letter was written Jan. 12, 1864. He had turned into quite an entrepreneur.

'Dear Sir,

'I rec'd your letter by Express with $20 and also yours with photographs of your sons for which I am much obliged. I will present you with a map of the Battlefield at Gettysburg. I am selling the map here. I will also send them to any part of the country if any of your friends should want any. I will send them to any one address for 25 cents or five for one dollar. John Frey.'

Alfred Noble survived the war, graduated from the University of Michigan in 1870 and became a civil engineer of international standing. He was the consulting engineer on the Panama Canal project, designer of the St. Mary's River Lock at the Soo, and designer of many bridges across the Mississippi River. He lived in New York at the time of his death in 1914, but never forgot his Michigan friends, whom he visited often. On June 19, 1905, he wrote the following letter to the wife of Charles Ryder, John and Alfred's younger brother (who lived until 1929):

'My Dear Mr. Ryder,

I am greatly obliged to you for sending me the copy of the ***Plymouth Mail*** *with Mrs. Bennett's excellent memorial of Alfred and John. It brings back to me many recollections of things we did and shared from our earliest boyhood. I well remember the visit to Alfred five days before Gettysburg. It had been a hard march from the Rapidan where we had been in camp and John, never very robust, was much worn, but his spirit never failed and the hard work of the next few days was done without a murmur. On the 29th of June, if I remember correctly, we marched about 30 miles through rain and deep mud.*

John and I were tent mates from the beginning of our camp life to the day of Gettysburg, and it is a great satisfaction to me that our boyhood friendship was not broken or disturbed. His death was a deep sorrow to me, but we had always anticipated death in battle and were prepared. But it did seem very hard that two brothers should be taken in the same battle. You know what their parents were, none better—none more highly or deservedly esteemed in any community. And these boys—so well brought up, so clean in mind, so well prepared for useful citizenship were, as I see it more clearly every day, of the best our country had—and indeed, the very salt of the earth.'"

Future Programs

Our Sunday programs cover a fascinating array of topics in unusual locations. We hope you will join us the third Sunday of every month, from 2-4 PM. All programs are free and open to the public. Light refreshments are usually served. Members receive a post card every month with more details and maps of how to reach the meeting.

SUNDAY • MARCH 16 • 2 PM
YPSILANTI FIRE EQUIPMENT MUSEUM, 110 W. CROSS ST.

Marcia McCrary, President of the Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County and Curator of the Fire Museum, will speak on the history of the Museum and its brand new addition.

SUNDAY • APRIL 27 • 2 PM
ST. ANDREWS EPISCOPAL CHURCH 300 N. DIVISION, ANN ARBOR
(Please note this is the fourth Sunday)

As part of the continuation of the celebration of the 175th anniversary of the founding of St. Andrew's, **Louisa Pieper** and **Grace Shackman** will give **walking tours** of the Old Fourth Ward Historic District surrounding the church. Docents will be giving guided tours of the church. ***The Windows of St. Andrew's,*** a book on the history of the church's windows, will be available for sale. Light refreshments will be served at 4 PM.

WEDNESDAY • MAY 21 • 6 PM
ANNUAL MEETING COBBLESTONE FARM BARN 2781 PACKARD RD.

The Annual Meeting and Election of Officers will be held at the **Cobblestone Farm** Barn and will consist of our usual yummy potluck plus a guided tour of the 1844 Cobblestone House and outbuildings.

Around The Town

As some of you may know, a horrendous fire seriously damaged the **historic Wells-Babcock house** at **208 N. Division** (corner of Ann) on January 27th. The blaze appears to have been started when welders removing a fire escape accidentally lit a bird's nest in the eaves of the rear wing. The back portion of the home, probably the original kitchen wing of this ca. 1858 building, was almost a total loss. The main block of the house, with its finely designed entry of golden oak, and walls covered with lincrustra [leather-like wallpaper] appears to have weathered this catastrophe, although no one has been allowed to return to their apartments. Neighborhood resident **Ilene Tyler** took these digital photos from her home across the street in the historic Wilson-Wahr house. This is probably the most architecturally significant corner in Ann Arbor, and this is a tragedy for the entire city and not just the residents who lost all their belongings. Luckily no one was injured.

On a brighter note, we can tell you that **The Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County's Older Adult Program** is offering a new series discussing Ann Arbor history. The next talk will be **Thursday, April 3** and will be given by **Pat Pooley** and **Ricky Agranoff** on the "***Culinary History of Ann Arbor.***" On **Thursday, May 15, Fay Woronoff** and **Ceil Pear** will speak on '***The History of Ann Arbor's Jewish Community.***" **Wystan Stevens** was scheduled to speak on February 13, but cancelled due to illness. This may be rescheduled for a future date. These events are at 11 AM at the Center located at **2935 Birch Hollow Drive**. On **Wednesday, May 21**, a "***Guided Bus Tour of Ann Arbor for Newcomers and Friends***" will be led by Around the Town, a company specializing in local tours. There is a $20 charge per person and reservations are required by May 15. To register **call 734-971-0990.**

The **Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County** will meet **Sunday, March 23,** at 1:30 PM when **Betty Klavitter** will lecture on "***Research in New York City, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.***" The class will be a panel discussion by members who have done research in various New York counties. Meetings are held at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center (use Parking Lot P), which is just east of Huron River Drive and Clark Road. You can visit their website at **www.hvcn.org/info/gswc/** or call **734-483-2799**. **Sharon Brevoort,** their webmaster, has just updated our information on their website. You can visit that at **www.hvcn.org/info/gswc/society/socwashtenaw.htm.**

For events at the **Kempf House, Cobblestone Farm,** and the **UM Detroit Observatory,** see last month's ***Impressions.***

The **Anna Botsford Bach Home** is now hosting mini-courses and lectures in conjunction with the **UM Learning in Retirement Program.** The Bach Home is being proposed as a Cultural and Educational Senior Center, which would work with the University to create this center for seniors over 55. On **Wednesdays, March 26, April 2,** and **April 9, Dr. Dev Pardanani**, musician and music scholar, will give a mini course on ***"Classical Music of India."*** The cost is $15. On **Wednesdays afternoons, March 5, 12** and **19,** historian **Grace Shackman** and **Prof. John Campbell** will be among the speakers in a four-part series entitled ***"Fireside Chats."*** Cost for this is $20. On **Wednesday** mornings **March 5, 12,** and **19, Prof. J. David Singer** will give a mini-course on "***War Continues. Why?***" A fourth program will be a **writing group,** where '***Everyone has a story to tell.***' **Janet Knapp** is the facilitator and the cost is $10. For more information, contact **Nancy Major** at **734-995-8308.** Or contact **Ann Tai, LIR Program Coordinator** at **734-998-9351**. The Botsford Home is located at 1422 W. Liberty, across from Zion Lutheran Church where parking is available. The house was built in 1916 by Dr. Robert MacKenzie and in 1927 became a residence for elderly women. It is named for Anna Botsford Bach, founder of the home.

Ann Arbor may be showcased again on **HGTV.** Producers of the show "***If Walls Could Talk***" will be in the area in April searching for interesting house stories to tell. We'll keep you posted. HGTV runs several series documenting the joys of living in historic houses and communities.

JPEG of fire at 208 N. Division St. Photo by Ilene Tyler.

Around The County

Preservation Eastern, the student organization of the Historic Preservation Program at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, has just published their latest newsletter. It is full of useful information. The preservation program (of which I confess to being a graduate) just gets better and better. In 1999, they began a **Field School at Fayette, Michigan** in the U.P. which gives a hands-on introduction to **historic building skills.** Thanks to the efforts of **Steve Stier,** barn restorer and skilled preservationist, EMU will now be offering a **fourth concentration** in Historic Preservation Technology. This will complement the other three concentrations in Planning, Administration and Interpretation.

The newsletter also reported the **demolition** of the **Business and Finance Building** on the EMU campus, built in 1939 and designed by **Ralph Gerganoff**, prominent architect of Ypsilanti and of the Washtenaw County Courthouse in Ann Arbor. Rumor now has it that **King Hall**, also designed by Gerganoff and built with **WPA** labor in **1939,** is also being considered for demolition. Proponents of keeping this Art Deco/Moderne structure are writing letters to the Regents and EMU President.

Also in the newsletter are some events still to come. On April 5, there will be a **tour of Historic Fort Wayne in Detroit.** The tour of the **Piquette Plant** is, however, still being worked on. If you want more information on their events, email **preservationeastern@yahoo.com** or call the Geography Department at EMU at **734-487-0218.**

Ypsilanti has a new brochure highlighting the museums in the area. Included are the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives at 220 N. Huron Street; the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection and Miller Motors at 100-112 E. Cross Street; The Yankee Air Museum at Willow Run Airport on Ecorse and Beck Roads; and the Michigan Antique Fire Equipment Museum at 110 W. Cross Street where we will hold our next meeting! Ypsilanti is becoming a hub for auto-related museums and it just keeps on growing and getting more attention. The latest issue of ***The Drive,*** the newsletter of **Motor Cities ANHA**, announced the relocation of the **Corvair Museum** to its new home in Ypsilanti. Read about the importance of the Corvair in automotive history, despite the fact it was only produced for a decade. Call **313-259-3425** to learn how to get a copy. The Bomber Restaurant on Michigan Ave. is also enjoying some attention as well.

The **Saline Area Historical Society's** programs on archaeology have been changed due to illness. On **Wednesday, March 19** at 7:30 PM, **Peter Kaplan,** Research Asst. in paleontology and doctoral candidate in geology at the University of Michigan will lecture on the "***Geology of Salt and the Historical Influence of Salt in the Saline Area.***" The lecture is free, light refreshments are served and it all takes place at the Saline Railroad Depot Museum, 402 N. Ann Arbor St. For more information contact **Agnes Dikeman** at **734-769-2219.**

The folks in **Chelsea** are again attempting to protect the downtown business district by having it listed on the **National Register of Historic Places.** According to **John L. Frank,** chairman of the **Chelsea Historic District Commission**, unlike the creation of a local district, National Register listing does not restrict repairs, remodeling or demolition. It does, however, allow one to take advantage of the 20% tax credits for historic rehabilitation. The creation of a local district in 1999 was strongly opposed by the citizens. According to Frank, along with the tax credits, the listing on the NR fosters civic pride and can lead to more heritage tourism. There are more than 1,000 listing on the National Register in Michigan and two are in Chelsea: Frank's home and the Chelsea Depot. We will keep you posted.

Governor **Jennifer Granholm** has named three present or former legislators from Ann Arbor to the new **Land Use Leadership Council.** Sen. **Liz Brater**, Rep. **Chris Kolb,** both Democrats and former Democratic State Sen. **Lana Pollack** were appointed to the 26-member commission last month. They will study ways to deal with urban sprawl and protect the agricultural heritage of Michigan. Also named to the Council were former Governor **William Milliken** and former Attorney General **Frank Kelley**, who are the co-chairs. According to an article in the ***Ann Arbor News*** on February 9, local farmers want urban sprawl contained and many want to continue farming. Their views were expressed at a farmland preservation workshop held at Webster Township Hall which drew about 160 people to hear 11 speakers. The organizers wanted to show public officials that many farmers don't want to give up farming, but need help with uncontrolled growth. **John Kingsley, Webster Township** trustee, noted that they are working on a **purchase of development rights ordinance**.

Speaking of **Webster Township,** the ***Ann Arbor News*** reported on February 17 that a stretch of **Strawberry Road** between Huron River Drive and Mast Road, is being considered for designation as a "**natural beauty road.**" Such roads are protected from being disturbed by paving, widening, grading, or curbs and gutters. A public hearing was held February 20th.

The ***Ann Arbor News*** also had a very interesting story written by **Tom Tolen** (2/10/03) on the **remonumentation** of Washtenaw County. That big word refers to the action of locating county section lines and making sure they are accurate and correctly marked. Both Washtenaw and Livingston Counties are employing a dozen surveyors to find the corner section markers, preserve them and keep property lines intact. This is just part of a statewide effort in Michigan's 83 counties to preserve, or reset, section markers when necessary. Section markers are usually buried in a monument box in the middle of the road, but **Charlie Garlock** of Howell, a retired surveyor, has a collection of markers made of antique brass caps, cedar, and iron pipes. This is a 20-year state project and Washtenaw County's effort will take another decade according to **Lori Beyer,** coordinator of the program.

Beyond Washtenaw

The **Plymouth Historical Museum's** "Hidden History" Program continues with talks on **Thursdays, March 13**, "***Don't Spit on the Sidewalk,***" **April 10**, "***Milliners, Seamstresses and Tailors,***" and **May 8** on "***The BB Gun Capital of the World.***" The first two talks are at the museum at 155 S. Main Street in downtown Plymouth. The BB Gun lecture, discussing the Daisy, Markham, Hamilton and Plymouth Air Rifle, will be at Dunleaveys. On **Saturday, June 12**, learn about '***Frog Spears, Mole Traps Cigars and Beer***" at the Box Bar, and on **Sunday, July 13**, hear about "***Plymouth's Milling History***" at the Museum at 2 PM. On **Sunday, August 10**, "***One Room Schoolhouses***" will discuss the Geer, Patchen, Stone School and others important in Plymouth's history. And on **Thursday, September 11**, "***Plymouth in the 20th Century***" will be discussed at the museum. For more information, call **734-455-8940,** or visit their website at **http://plymouthlibrary.org/~history/.**

The **Green Oak Township Historical Society** newsletter has a masthead with a drawing of the **Old Township Hall**, asking "Could this be our new mast-head???" Their membership meeting is **Sunday, March 16,** from 2-4 PM at the hall at 10789 Silver Lake Road. You can tour the building, have some refreshments, and learn of the prehistory of the area, when mastodons roamed 10,000 years ago, from **Ann Zinn** of the **Michigan Archaeological Society**. Ms. Zinn is a native of Ann Arbor and the daughter of Prof. Frank Copley. She and her husband Karl moved to Green Oak 34 years ago. She has been deeply involved with the MAS, Huron Valley Chapter, for over 15 years. Her most exciting find was a mastodon footprint near Saline. You can contact the society at emailing Jo Williams at **JoWilliams26@msn.com**, calling **248-437-8461** or write a note of support **to GOTHS, PO Box 84, Brighton, MI 48116.**

The **Tecumseh Area Historical Society** also has some interesting events planned. On **Wednesday, March 19** at 7 PM, take "***A Journey by Train through Tecumseh***" at the Museum. On **Sunday, April 27** at 7 PM, learn about "***A History of American Ragtime***" with the River Raisin Ragtime Revue at the Civic. The Train Journey is presented by **Charlie Conn,** past president of the Harbor Springs Historical Society, who will show slides of buildings visible from the tracks a hundred years ago. Go through Brighton, Ridgeway, Tecumseh and Tipton to Onsted and back. Toot toot!!! Call **517-423-2374** or visit **www.historictecumseh.com.**

The **Historical Society of Michigan** is sponsoring History Workshops beginning **Saturday, March 15**. On that date "***Basic Archival Skills for Historical Societies, Churches and Other Organizations***" is the topic and **Dr. Richard Harms** is the instructor. This workshop will be held at the HSM Officers in East Lansing. On **Saturday, April 19,** at the **Tuomy House** in Ann Arbor, learn about "***Historic Books—How to Identify, Mend, Collect and Care for Valuable Volumes.***" The instructor will be **Jay Platt.** A workshop on "***How to Successfully Publish your History Book***" will be held in Grayling at the Hartwick Pines State Park CCC Museum on **Saturday, May 17**. Workshop fees are $35 for members, $45 for non-members. Each workshop includes lunch, refreshments and handouts. They begin at 9:30 AM and conclude at 2:30 PM. Also, at the UP History Conference in Cedarville, you can learn how to preserve historic properties and get students to do research at your museum. Contact the Historical Society at 1305 Abbot Rd, East Lansing, MI 48823, call **517-324-4370** or visit their website at **www.hsmichigan.org.**

On **Tuesday, March 20,** at 7 PM, the award-winning documentary film ***Blue Vinyl*** will be presented at the Hannah Community Center, 819 Abbot Road in East Lansing. Sponsored by the State Historic Preservation Office, the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, the Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council and Urban Options, this film by **Judith Helfand** deals with her parents decision to vinyl side their home. Helfand travels to American's vinyl manufacturing capital searching for answers on the nature of PVC production. Her discoveries are shocking but delivered in a humorous vein. The film "connects with everyone who feels older buildings are recyclable resources as well as those concerned with the health of our environment." The cost is $6.00 and a reception will follow where you can meet the filmmaker. For more information check out **www.bluevinyl.org.**

For those of you who like your history really old, check out the exhibit on the **Dead Sea Scrolls** at the **Grand Rapids Public Museum.** They will be hosting a lecture on the conservation of the scrolls on **Tuesday, May 20**, at 7 PM. The lecture is by **Pnina Shor**, Head of Artifacts Treatment and Conservation in Jerusalem. Tickets are $12 which includes admission to the exhibit. Contact the museum at **616-456-3977** or see **www.grmuseum.org.**

Detroit has many interesting exhibits to view, including the opening of the **New "Old First" Congregational Church Conference Center** which now houses the **Underground Railroad Living Museum**. Call **313-831-4080** for tour dates and times. **Woodward Heritage**, a joint endeavor of two non-profit organizations in Oakland and Wayne Counties to promote **Woodward Avenue**, received Michigan's first and only **National Scenic Byway** designation from the US Dept. of Transportation. **Deborah Schutt,** the coordinator of Woodward Heritage, remarked the feds "couldn't think of another road in the U.S. that has had such an influence on American culture." (quoted in **Hour Magazine**, February issue). Most of the other roads designated have been for scenic beauty, but this designation is one offering an urban experience, according to **Rob Draper, Scenic Byways Director** of the **Federal Highway Administration.** There are many firsts to celebrate along Woodward Avenue: the first Model T and Assembly Line, the first mile of concrete highway, (1909), the first state fair in the US, the first three-color traffic signal, the birthplace of the Shrine Circus, the first prominent civil rights group (The Afro-American League formed in 1889) and the first zoo without bars! Think of all this the next time you drive down Woodward for the Dream Cruise!

Detroit's **Brush Park,** once the home for the pre-auto elite along Woodward Avenue, was written up in the ***Detroit Free Press*** (February 7) for the restored row houses and new construction that are popping up in the area. Thanks to **Crosswinds Communities,** new row houses and restored ones are being built for the first time after decades of neglect. Eventually they hope to have 800 units in a new development called Woodward Place. This is the best news in this area in the last 100 years!

Your Museum

We now have close to 400 members so thank you one and all for joining! Please remember that if you have some free time we have lots of opportunities for **volunteers.** You can be a guide on the days the Museum is open, help in the garden, or contribute in other ways. Just give us a call at **734-662-9092.**

The heating and cooling system, after a number of fits and starts, is finally working thanks to the people at **Robertson-Morrison**. Broken parts were replaced, vents repaired and now **Judy Chrisman** can once again work in the basement on the collections without freezing and **Pauline** can work upstairs without sweltering!

Treasurer **Patty Creal** and Board member **Cynthia Yao** have put together a tentative budget based on our expenditures and income over the last two years. We hope to have a document available for our Annual Meeting, at which we will also vote on changing our fiscal year to a calendar year. Watch you April newsletter for details.

Sally Silvennoinen, our Education person, has taken our **What's It?** program and **Loan Boxes** to Dicken, Abbott and Lawton Schools. If you are interested in having her come to your school or group meeting, call Pauline Walters at the museum and we'll set something up.

The **Consortium** seems to be growing like topsy. Salem Township has now joined and we have 20 groups who will be listed in our brochure on historic sites in Washtenaw County. **Louisa Pieper**, who is coordinating this effort, deserves a round of applause. You can clap for her at the **State and Local History Conference** to be held at Wayne State University **April 9,** where she and Pauline will discuss how small historical societies and museums can help one another. The brochure will be printed at a cost of $3,500 for 8,000 copies. Look for them soon.

Sue Kosky, our Museum Shop Coordinator, has reported that we are in the final stages of producing a 'throw' (with the consortium) that will feature a map of Washtenaw County and photographic representations of local historical buildings. Watch for them soon in the museum shop.

Tom Freeman reported that the **Bach Estate** investments are still producing income for us, despite the poor economy. Once we have an idea of our yearly income, we will begin to advertise for a position for a part-time director for the Museum.

Pauline reports that she is having good luck with community service people. She also received in the mail, unsolicited but very welcome, an **index** of the **1953-1958** ***Impressions***. It was done by **Steve Knowlton,** a student in the Wayne State University Library Science Department. He has volunteered to continue indexing the ***Impressions*** for us! We love all the help we get from the community. It means a lot to us! Speaking of which, we would also like to thank **Ann Arbor Snow Removal** for clearing our sidewalks without charge, and the 'pixie' who cleared our driveway entrance, who turns out to be member **David Ferguson** on his way to work. We have also had help from **Sharon Bahadosingh** who helped mount the Northfield photos for the exhibit.

What Is It???

Our Education Chair **Sally Silvennoinen** would like teachers and groups to know about her work with the **"What's It" Game.** It consists of 12 artifacts from our collections and travels with Sally to schools or groups who request it. One artifact is a candle mold. Another is a foot warmer used in sleighs that brings back memories of her grandpa's sleigh blanket and warming stone. Sally has question sheets with three choices and you guess what the artifact is. She also demonstrates how it was used.

Sally also manages our two **Loan Boxes**, entitled **Life Before Electricity** and **Hats to Spats**. Both loan boxes are available for $15, with a deposit of $50. They are self-guided and designed particularly for elementary and middle school children. They consist of artifacts that can be touched, books, and ideas for projects. Anyone interested in obtaining the Loan Boxes, or in having Sally demonstrate the What's It Game should call her at **734-971-5086.**

News You Can Use

Worried about terrorism but want to visit historic sites? You can visit the **White House** anytime, in cyberspace of course! A multimedia site was inaugurated in November 2002 and includes video tours of the West Wing by Vice President **Dick Cheney,** coinciding with its 100th anniversary. President **George W. Bush** gives a 7-minute tour of the Oval Office and First Lady **Laura Bush** takes her virtual visitors to the diplomatic reception rooms. Catch this site at **www.whitehouse.gov/life.** You can also find other sites to visit at **www.travelthepast.com.** I'm told this is a very cool site.

Do you have a kit house or want to know about them? You can learn at least about the Sears variety at their website **www.SearsModernhomes.com.** It features a history of the Sears Modern Homes program which produced more than 100,000 houses between 1908 and 1940. A registry of owners is included as well as photographs, catalog advertisements and references.

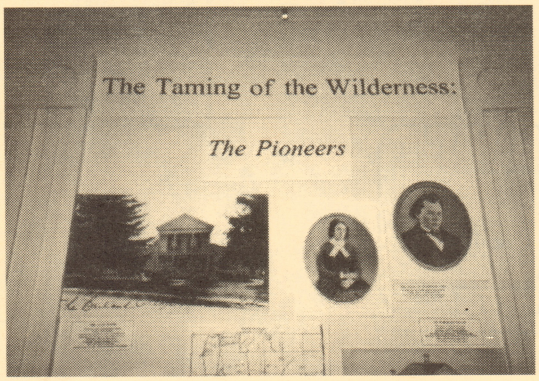
For those of you who like Modern architecture (a lot of which is now endangered), you might try looking at the website for **DOCOMOMO,** which stands for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings…of the Modern Movement. It was founded in 1988 in The Netherlands and now has groups in 40 countries. The US branch is in New York City. You can find their list of US buildings (which has nothing from Michigan!!!) at their website at **www.docomomo-us.org.**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has launched **on-line newsletters.** You can read the regional newsletters (midwest, mountains, northeast, southern, southwest, and western) if you are a member. To learn more, visit their website at **www.nationaltrust.org.** They are chock full of information, some encouraging, some depressing. One thing you should know is that they are now partnering with Avis Rent-a-Car and if you rent your car from them, they will refund a portion of your fees to the National Trust.

Pittsfield And Northfield Townships...

Carl Ticknor watches over the Pittsfield items on display. Photo: S. Wineberg

We had lots of visitors during our Open House in February.



Joseph and Elizabeth Pray were early pioneers as were Christian and Lydia Zuck who built this Greek Revival farmhouse on Whitmore Lake Road in Northfield Township.

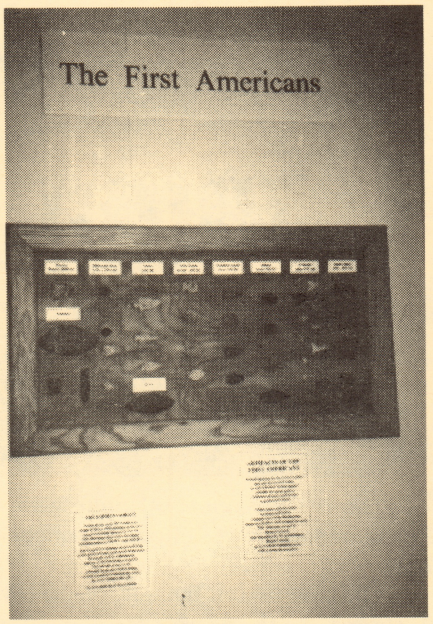
Continued from page 1.

As the tide of pioneers grew, these governmental units were further divided by a formula derived from the **Northwest Ordinance of 1787**. It gave Washtenaw County 20 townships, each 36 square miles in sections one mile square. Early deeds and census records define some of the first settlers of Pittsfield and Northfield as Ann Arbor residents, but a few years later each township had a large enough population to become a political entity on its own.

Northfield separated from Ann Arbor in 1832 and Pittsfield did the same two years later (it was then simply called **'Pitt'**, to honor **William Pitt the Elder**, a British statesman and supporter of the American Revolution). Northfield didn't perversely honor the Revolution's famous opponent, Lord North, but instead was named for its location north of Ann Arbor. The famous **Sauk Indian Trail** (now US-12) crosses through Pittsfield and was the route used by Sauk Chief **Black Hawk** on his annual trip to Malden in Canada to receive tribute from the British. Pittsfield has the honor of having built the first school in Washtenaw in 1825. It became the first Charter Township in Washtenaw County in 1972. Learn more on their website at **www.pittsfieldhistory.org.**

Through a quirk of fate, another Pittsfield resident, **surveyor Jonathon Stratton** named **Whitmore Lake,** Northfield's most famous town, for a Pittsfield resident, **Oliver Whitmore.** The two men were on a mapping trek when they camped one night beside the water. The next day Stratton named the glacial remnant for his genial companion. Stratton's sister, **Lydia Zuck**, and her husband **Christian,** were the first settlers at the lake.

Both townships have fields in their names recalling their agricultural past, a coincidence they share with no other in the county. Because they share a proximity to Ann Arbor, both today are besieged by development pressures and are forced to confront the diminished economic viability of the family farms that have sustained them for 170 years.



A nice display of Indian arrowheads from Northfield owned by Dennis Leland and assembled by his grandfather Ralph Leland. Photo : S. Wineberg

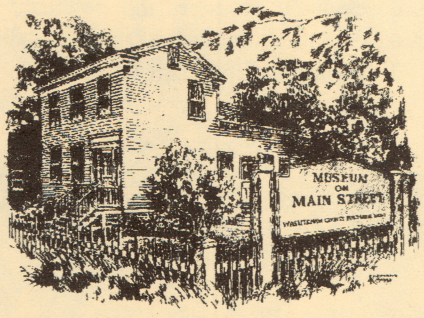
Whitmore Lake was the main tourist attraction in Northfield and boating and swimming were actively pursued. Photo: S. Wineberg

University Doings

The UM President's House with its new historically accurate windows. Photo: S. Wineberg.

The most historic building on the UM campus, the **President's House** built in **1840** (and the only building remaining of the first campus), is once again occupied. President Mary Sue Coleman and family moved into the residence in late February after over $1million of investment. Wiring and heating have been upgraded, the kitchen has been completely remodeled, and new windows—in the style of the original ones—have replaced those put in around 1900. You can see in the historic photo of another of the four professor's houses what the house originally looked like. The newer photo was taken in mid-February 2003 and shows how the house has grown over time.

JPEG Photo of one of four professor's houses. Courtesy Bentley Library, Sturgis Collection.



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